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REPORT OF THE AD HOC WORKING GROUP TO THE FIFTH SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES

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I. ORGANIZATION OF THE SESSION

A. Opening of the session

1. The inter-session of the Ad Hoc Working Group (AHWG), convened pursuant to decision 1/COP.4, was opened in Bonn, Germany, on 16 March 2001, by the Executive Secretary of the secretariat of the Convention to Combat Desertification. Following the formal opening, Mr. El Ghaouth, co-Chairman of the AHWG, made a statement.

2. At the 1st meeting, statements were also made by the representatives of Sweden (on behalf of the European Union and its member states) and Iran (on behalf of the Group of 77 and China).

3. Summaries of the statements made during the opening session are to be found in annex I.

B. Adoption of the agenda

4. At the 1st meeting, the AHWG adopted its agenda as contained in ICCD/COP(4)/AHWG/5.

C. Attendance

5. The resumed session of the AHWG was attended by representatives of the following 111 Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification:

Algeria
Argentina
Armenia
Australia
Austria
Azerbaijan
Bangladesh
Barbados
Belgium
Benin
Botswana
Brazil
Burundi
Cambodia
Cameroon
Canada
Chad
Chile
China
Colombia
Costa Rica
Côte d'Ivoire
Cuba
Czech Republic
Democratic Republic of the Congo
Denmark
Djibouti
Dominican Republic
Ecuador
Egypt
El Salvador
Eritrea
Ethiopia
European Community
Fiji
Finland
France
Gambia
Georgia
Germany
Ghana
Greece
Grenada
Guatemala
Guinea
Guinea-Bissau
Guyana
Haiti
Honduras
India
Indonesia
Iran (Islamic Republic of)
Israel
Italy
Jamaica
Japan
Jordan
Kazakhstan
Kenya
Kyrgyzstan
Lebanon
Lesotho
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya
Madagascar
Malawi
Mali
Mauritania
Mexico
Monaco
Mongolia
Morocco
Myanmar
Nepal
Netherlands
Nicaragua
Niger
Nigeria
Norway
Oman
Pakistan
Palau
Panama
Paraguay
Peru
Philippines
Portugal
Republic of Korea
Rwanda
Saint Lucia
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
Saudi Arabia
South Africa
Spain
Sri Lanka
Sudan
Sweden
Switzerland
Syrian Arab Republic
Togo
Tunisia
Turkey
Uganda
United Arab Emirates

United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
United States of America
Uruguay
Venezuela
Viet Nam
Yemen
Zambia
Zimbabwe

6. The following regional and interest groups were also represented:

Group of African countries (Benin)
Group of Asian countries (Syrian Arab Republic)
Group of Eastern European countries (Czech Republic)
Group of Latin American and the Caribbean countries (Jamaica)
Group of 77 and China (Islamic Republic of Iran)
European Union (Sweden)
JUSCANZ Group of countries (Canada)

7. Representatives of the Committee on Science and Technology and non-governmental organizations also attended the meeting.

8. The following United Nations organizations, offices and specialized agencies were represented:

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)
World Meteorological Organization (WMO)

D. Organization of work

9. The AHWG held 29 meetings from 19 March to 6 April 2001, and made a number of recommendations to the Conference of the Parties, which are contained in section V.

10. The resumed session of the AHWG reviewed the reports of 32 African, 30 Asian and 26 Latin American and the Caribbean countries, in addition to those of 4 Northern Mediterranean and other affected countries and 3 reports from Central and Eastern European countries. Subregional activities for regional Annexes II and III were likewise presented.

11. The resumed session of the AHWG heard presentations of national reports from the following affected country Parties. Parties which had completed their national action programme (NAP) are marked with an asterisk.

Algeria
Armenia
Australia
Azerbaijan
Bangladesh
Barbados
Botswana
Brazil
Burundi
Cambodia
Cameroon
Chad
Colombia
Costa Rica
Côte d'Ivoire
Democratic Republic of the Congo
Djibouti
Dominican Republic
Ecuador
Egypt
El Salvador
Eritrea
Ethiopia*
Fiji
Gambia*
Georgia
Ghana
Greece
Grenada
Guatemala
Guinea
Guinea-Bissau
Guyana
Haiti
Honduras
India
Indonesia
Iran (Islamic Republic of)
Israel
Jamaica
Jordan
Kazakhstan
Kenya
Kyrgyzstan
Lebanon
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya
Madagascar
Malawi
Malaysia
Mauritania
Mexico
Morocco
Mozambique
Myanmar
Nepal
Nicaragua
Niger*
Nigeria*
Oman
Pakistan*
Palau
Panama
Paraguay
Peru

Philippines
Rwanda
Saint Kitts and Nevis
Saint Lucia
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
Saudi Arabia
South Africa
Spain
Sri Lanka
Sudan
Syrian Arab Republic
Togo
Turkey
Uganda*
United Arab Emirates
Uruguay
Venezuela
Viet Nam
Yemen*
Zambia
Zimbabwe*

12. It also heard the following subregional reports:

Subregional action programme for Western Asia
Subregional action programme for Central Asia
El Gran Chaco Americano
La Puna Americana

13. It further heard the presentations of the reports of the following developed country Parties:

Australia (also on behalf of Japan, Canada and Switzerland)
Austria
Finland
France
Germany
Israel
Netherlands
Sweden
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

14. It also heard the presentations of the following United Nations organizations as well as international and multilateral agencies:

UNDP
UNEP
WMO
International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT)
Arab Centre for Studies of Arid Zones and Dry Lands (ACSAD)

15. Reports from the following countries were reviewed without presentations: Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Bahrain, Belgium, Belize, Denmark, Dominica, Italy, Kuwait, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Mozambique, Niue, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Romania, Singapore, Spain (as developed country Party) and Tuvalu.

E. Documentation

16. The documents submitted for the consideration of the AHWG at its resumed session are listed in annex III.

F. Previous meetings of the Ad Hoc Working Group

17. At its first session, convened during COP 4[1], the AHWG held nine meetings, from 15 to 21 December 2000. The interim report of the co-Chairmen was adopted by the AHWG and submitted to the Conference of the Parties for consideration.

18. At its first session, the AHWG reviewed the national reports of 10 African, 6 Asian and 4 Latin American and the Caribbean country Parties

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[1] For the final report of the fourth session of the Conference of the Parties, see documents ICCD/COP(4)/11 and 11/Add.1.

affected, in addition to 2 Northern Mediterranean countries and one report from Central and Eastern European countries. Regional activities for all annexes were discussed, as well as subregional reports for Africa.

19. The list of presentations which took place during the first session of the AHWG is indicated below for easy reference.

Argentina
Benin
Bolivia
Burkina Faso
Cape Verde
Chile
China
Cuba
Italy
Lao People's Democratic Republic
Lesotho
Mali
Mongolia
Namibia
Portugal
Republic of Moldova
Senegal
Swaziland
Tajikistan
Tunisia
Turkmenistan
United Republic of Tanzania
Uzbekistan
Regional Latin America and the Caribbean
Regional Asia
Regional Africa
Regional Northern Mediterranean
Subregional - Southern African Development Community (SADC)
Subregional - Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)
Subregional - Permanent Inter-State Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS/CEDEAO)
Subregional - Arab Maghreb Union (AMU)

II. INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

A. Legislative mandate

20. By its decision 6/COP.3, the Conference of the Parties (COP) decided to establish an Ad Hoc Working Group (AHWG) to review and analyse in depth, at the fourth session, reports submitted at its third and fourth session in order to draw conclusions and propose concrete recommendations on further steps in the implementation of the Convention. Arrangements for the convening of the AHWG during COP 4 were, as requested in decision 6/COP.3, proposed by the Executive Secretary and are contained in document ICCD/COP(4)/3/Add.7(A). It is the understanding of the Conference that the Ad Hoc Working Group is a subsidiary body of the Conference of the Parties.

21. Pursuant to decision 1/COP.4, the AHWG received its procedural guidelines. Due to the size of the report exercise, the Parties agreed on an inter-sessional meeting of the AHWG, of up to 15 working days, before COP 5. The decision on procedures stipulated that the AHWG would review all national reports individually prior to COP 5 and would analyse the reports by adopting thematic approaches without neglecting other issues contained in the reports. The thematic aspects are reflected in this report under section IV.

22. As requested in decision 1/COP.4, the AHWG submitted for review and adoption an interim report of its work which *inter alia* also stipulated recommendations for the inter-sessional meeting. The interim report was annexed to decision 2/COP.4. The recommendations are contained in annex II to this report.

23. The interim report of the co-Chairmen was very well received by the Conference of the Parties and became an integral part of the report of COP 4. Therefore the present report develops some of its key highlights and includes complementary information and analysis with a view to submitting its conclusions and concrete recommendations, in a comprehensive manner, to the Conference of the Parties at its fifth session.

24. Also, in the light of decision 3/COP.4, the comprehensive report of the AHWG will strive to facilitate the discussions and the subsequent decision on the establishment of a committee to review the implementation of the Convention (CRIC).

B. Composition of the Ad Hoc Working Group

25. The Ad Hoc Working Group is composed of:

(a) Representatives of affected country Parties which have submitted their reports to the third and fourth sessions of the Conference of the Parties;

(b) Representatives of developed country Parties;

(c) Representatives of observers, intergovernmental and accredited non-governmental organizations, the United Nations and its specialized agencies;

(d) The chairmen of the regional and interest groups;

(e) The Chairman of the Committee on Science and Technology.

C. Elected officers

26. By decision 2/COP.4, the Conference of the Parties elected Mr. Willem R. J. Van Cotthem (Belgium) and Mr. Mohamed Mahmoud Ould El Ghaouth (Mauritania) as co-Chairmen of the Ad Hoc Working Group. Mr. Mohammad Reza Jabbari (Islamic Republic of Iran), Mr. Octavio Pérez Pardo (Argentina) and Mr. Ogtay Jafarov (Azerbaijan) were elected as Vice-Chairmen. Mr. Jafarov was also designated as Rapporteur of the AHWG.

III. KEY ASPECTS AND TRENDS OF THE PRESENTATIONS

A. Features of the proceedings

27. The co-Chairmen, considering the quality of presentations and the content of the exchanges, reiterate the value of the implementation review. They stress the importance for the Convention of fostering an improved flow of information, an interactive and coordinated analysis and assessment, and agreed standards against which to evaluate the effectiveness of measures taken and their contribution to a lessons-based learning process. They express their appreciation for the excellent presentations of affected country Parties and of developed country Parties. Affected developing country Parties observed, however, that the quality of the national reports and the related presentations could have been improved if the funding for reporting activities had been more consistent.

28. Furthermore, many Parties stated that the resumed session of the AHWG was somewhat flawed as it was not possible to conclude the review process in the presence of, and with the input from, all Parties. Critical policy issues or themes of particular importance need to be identified and pursued further.

29. Pursuant to decision 3/COP.4, the secretariat will facilitate access to information on the two sessions of the AHWG. The comprehensive report of the AHWG as well as the country Parties' presentations will be available on the Web site of the secretariat at <http://www.unccd.int>.

B. Presentations of affected country Parties

30. The presentations during the two sessions of the AHWG demonstrated the worldwide mobilization of affected country Parties to combat desertification. Similarities and features deemed common to affected developing country Parties include: (i) Parties have taken institutional measures to implement the Convention; (ii) They face the difficulty of harmonizing a multitude of pertinent programming instruments dealing with the management of natural resources; (iii) In this context they express the need for some technical and financial support to carry the process forward ; (iv) The intertwined challenge of land degradation and poverty threatens to worsen in the present context of climate change.

31. A number of affected country Parties presenting their reports at the resumed session are countries whose ecosystems are not characterized by drylands conditions, but whose territories include areas affected nevertheless by land degradation. This is notably the case for various countries of Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Northern Mediterranean and for the country members of the new Regional Implementation Annex for Central and Eastern Europe. The impact of human and climatic factors was discussed in the context of the relationships between various ecological zones. These countries chose to follow processes recommended in the provisions of the Convention for tackling desertification and various forms of land degradation. They advocated policies and preventive measures to avoid the expansion of already degraded areas.

32. The affected developing country Parties stated that the conditions in their respective countries were often characterized by growing population pressure, increased demands on natural resources and the continued marginalization of lower income groups. Climatic factors such as the El Niño aggravate droughts, water scarcity, loss of vegetation cover and land degradation trends. Occurrences of many natural catastrophes were reported as having severe consequences for many Parties. Reference was made to the migratory movements of affected populations which have to be addressed by the global community. The relationship between desertification and conflicts was also mentioned. The presentations highlighted policies and programmes developed under UNCCD, and the institutional arrangements put into place as well as the need for capacity building and financial support. A large number of affected developing country Parties expressed the wish that enabling measures to combat desertification and to mitigate the effects of drought should be considered in their own right under the framework of the Global Environment Facility (GEF). They underlined the interdependency between Parties relating from interlinked factors such as accelerated climate change, worsening conditions in the drylands and resulting migratory patterns. South-South cooperation between the regional implementation annexes of the Convention was also called for, notably in the area of capacity building. These Parties wonder what the additional dimension provided by UNCCD is, if assistance must compete with other Official Development Assistance (ODA) priorities within the traditional channels for bilateral assistance. They recall that the Rio conventions are meant to replace aid by partnership and they welcome evolving attitudes in this respect.

33. Many affected developed countries expressed their interest in exchanging technical experience with other affected countries, both developing and developed. They also stated that they would like the format of the Help Guide for the national reports to be further elaborated to reflect the needs of affected developed countries.

C. Informal regional wrap-up meetings and subregional/regional programmes

a) Africa

34. After presentation and review of 42 national reports as well as 5 subregional and regional reports from Africa, it can be stated that these affected country Parties have delivered a quite homogenous picture in terms of pertinent issues raised by countries concerning the implementation of UNCCD. However, representatives of countries of the Central African subregion highlighted the fact that they are seen as "green countries", mainly suffering from land degradation, and it has thus been difficult to attract financial and technical assistance under UNCCD.

35. African countries reported positive results in the fields of awareness-raising and the participation of civil society and at the institutional level. However, bearing in mind the iterative nature of the participatory process, participants noted that the integration of national stakeholders needs continuous strengthening.

36. Referring to the conclusions resulting from consultation on implementation of national action programmes (NAPs) and partnership agreements held in Cotonou (February 2000), African countries unanimously noted that mobilization of resources still remains a core challenge. African countries that adopted their NAP identified significant financial challenges. Likewise, concerns were expressed concerning the lack of transfer of technology. These countries face difficulties in ensuring that this national priority receives an appropriate allocation of national budgets, and further, subsequent to launching the consultative process at national level, they are challenged by the lack of response from developed country Parties, i.e. the conclusion of concrete partnership arrangements.

37. In the interventions, developed country Parties described the conditions they would wish to see in order to be ready to meet their obligations and to assist those affected countries having a NAP through the financing of priority activities. Specifically, they are seeking the relevant level of commitment by recipient governments, reflected in priority setting and budgetary allocation by ministries of finance which are the key contact points in bilateral discussions. At the same time, recipients emphasize the following two major shortcomings: (a) International partners wish to orient their assistance towards priorities listed by recipient governments in non-UNCCD-related forums; CCD-NAP implementation is often not listed as a priority area, and (b) The integration of the UNCCD process into major global strategic frameworks for cooperation, such as poverty reduction strategies, seems to be considered as a prior condition for NAP funding. But such a conditionality is not warranted, for these instruments are not prepared in all affected Parties. Consensus was reached on the fact that the integration at high political level of NAPs and national development frameworks is to be facilitated by joint efforts taking place in developing countries.

38. In this context, it was realized that embassies of donor countries are often not fully informed on the UNCCD process, and therefore need to be addressed from both ends, i.e. their governments and the recipient countries. *Chefs de file* are needed in all countries to coordinate the cooperation of partners. Parties noted the need for synergism at all levels, not only as a requirement for the recipient countries. Effective support through the field offices of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Global Mechanism and through the hoped-for opening of a GEF window for desertification-related activities was also called for.

39. African country Parties also called for enhanced strengthening of subregional and regional bodies engaged in the implementation of the Convention, as well as further empowerment of civil society and capacity building in the training and education area. They reaffirmed the necessary supportive role of the regional coordination unit (RCU).

40. Finally, the lack of work accomplished on the issues of benchmarks and indicators and Committee on Science and Technology (CST) liaison activities was broadly recognized and addressed.

41. One country Party made an observation concerning the membership of the North African subregion with a view to formulating a programme for North Africa, and requested the secretariat to facilitate this endeavour. An other country Party expressed its readiness to cooperate on this issue.

b) Asia

42. The AHWG reviewed national reports from 37 country Parties as well as 2 subregional and/or regional reports. The wrap-up meeting for Asia raised the following points. Asia is the continent which includes the greatest land mass of area affected by desertification where food security concerns are heightened by population growth. The continent is also an area prone to natural disasters. Droughts, in correlation with climate change, have recently taken a heavy toll on the countries of the region from Jordan to the Pacific island states. It is a region characterized by a wide range of physical and ecological conditions; this is particularly noteworthy in the light of the fact that 2002 will be the International Year of Mountains. There is also a wide discrepancy in income levels within the region.

43. In this context, the Asian developing country Parties reiterated their strong need for the substantial financial resources that should now materialize in order to move the UNCCD process forward.

44. Asian Parties recognize the need to tackle major policy issues in order to improve the management of natural resources. Asia is also looking for technology transfers and is exploring a range of high technology responses including: developing drought resistant crops, drip irrigation, desalination plants, treatment of brackish water, and GIS monitoring systems, but such capacities are unequally distributed. South-South and North-South cooperation on early warning systems and other types of support for environmental management is called for.

45. Lack of financial resources and trained staff hamper the process. Many countries have not completed their NAP. Countries which have completed their NAP wonder how solidarity will now materialize in terms of implementing these programmes. They wish to review the options for cooperation with their partners through consultations in their own countries. Transparency in funding mechanisms is a priority requirement.

46. Given the vastness of the continent, closer cooperation at the subregional level was deemed essential. Strong support was expressed for the regional action programmes (RAPs) and the subregional action programmes (SRAPs). These instruments are consistent with a rational ecosystem approach, and can exploit in a cost effective manner the results of research, science and technology. Western Asia and Central Asia have taken steps to foster such cooperation but support is slow to come and the secretariat was invited to activate subregional cooperation in the South Asian (SACEP) context. Interest for closer cooperation was also expressed for the North-Eastern and South-Eastern Asian subregions. The secretariat was invited to explore the feasibility of these proposals and to facilitate such initiatives as well as the synergy between the Rio conventions.

47. Furthermore, the call was reiterated for the secretariat and donors to support a subregional consultation for the Pacific island states Parties on drought mitigation, capacity building and information/technology transfer. The Asian RCU of the secretariat located in Bangkok is required to foster the coherence of these initiatives in the region and to assist in the evaluation of progress made.

48. The call was also reiterated for the secretariat and donors to strengthen and support the work of the RCU.

49. Developed country Parties recognized the specific problems of the Asia region caused by desertification and its socio-economic consequences. Poverty alleviation remains one of the major challenges in rural areas and needs to be given special attention. It was acknowledged that given the vastness of the region, subregional and regional action programmes to combat desertification are of particular importance to a successful and efficient implementation of UNCCD. Considering the wealth of traditional knowledge which exists in countries of regional Annex II, a further integration of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society in UNCCD activities will help to give impetus to the process. South-South cooperation was called for which could also facilitate improved information sharing between the countries involved.

c) Latin America and the Caribbean

50. The wrap-up meeting reflected the fact that there is a general misconception that the Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) region is a green region. Most of the speakers expressed their concern about the increase of land degradation processes and causes of severe drought. The majority of Latin American and Caribbean countries are very much engaged in preparing their NAPs for implementation of UNCCD and are exploring ways of integrating them with other environmental problems.

51. Some countries expressed concern that addressing land degradation and desertification processes is not yet a priority in the agenda of their governments because of competing urgent priorities. They consider it necessary to work much more on awareness-raising at government and local levels. They also emphasized the need to link land degradation with the struggle against poverty.

52. In contrast, other countries indicated that drought issues already have a high priority in their environmental and sustainable development agendas, affecting economic activities in the short and/or long run. Other instances of natural catastrophes were also mentioned.

53. Policy design in these countries intends to use standard and innovative instruments that provide strong economic incentives to stakeholders, especially affected local communities, such as payment for environmental services and legalization of property rights. It was also suggested that the process of achieving synergies between the Rio conventions be facilitated by convening workshops of the relevant national focal points at the national level.

54. Countries also expressed the need, as a high priority in their agenda, for support for the finalization of their NAPs. They requested the secretariat to do its utmost to assist them with the accomplishment of these, and also the various projects adopted by the region in different meetings. They expressed concern that budget limitations are a constraint that prevents them from continuing the process of implementing projects and measures to combat land degradation. Countries also highlighted the need for more synergy among sister conventions to allow them to maximize human and financial resources, and they requested technical assistance in this respect.

55. Countries that have already prepared their NAPs requested support for the prompt organization of consultative processes for partnership agreements.

56. Countries also expressed their concern about the continuity of actions that UNDP has been carrying out in the region, and requested the UNCCD secretariat to combine its efforts with UNDP in order to strengthen the implementation of the Convention in Latin America and the Caribbean.

57. Due to the lack of financial resources to combat desertification and drought in the region, countries expressed the urgent need to bring new financial resources to the GEF and to open a GEF window for desertification projects in order to overcome what is perceived as a financial bottleneck in the implementation process.

58. Developed country Parties stated that the Latin American and Caribbean region presented frank, interesting, well-structured reports which drew good quality debates, and declared their willingness to make adjustments in order to continue and improve the process. They stated also that the need for new and additional financial and technical support is clearly recognized in the region, particularly for the formulation and implementation of NAPs, taking into account that some countries of the region have made important advances in the allocation and use of domestic resources to combat desertification and drought.

59. Another issue addressed by these Parties was the recognition of the high potential for synergy among the Rio conventions and horizontal cooperation that can be fostered in the region.

d) The Northern Mediterranean, Central and Eastern Europe, and other affected countries

60. The AHWG reviewed one regional and five national reports from the Northern Mediterranean. These presentations demonstrated the progress made in this region in implementing the Convention. The five countries, being both affected and developed, implement the Convention by ensuring their own funding for activities at national level, and by providing funding at international level to the developing countries. The complexity of national coordination issue was underlined; this is due to the multiple long-standing administrative structures and technical services dealing with desertification-related issues. The need to give official status to, and to enforce, the national coordinating mechanism was also recognized, in order to deal with such inter-sectoral issues. These countries have to find a way of better determining which, among all their internal sustainable development activities, are desertification related. The participatory approach in desertification is still a new process which will be improved by increasing awareness raising among all the stakeholders.

61. The presentations of the Northern Mediterranean countries emphasized the importance of national research activities and also the need both for application of the results obtained and for further scientific and technical cooperation. It was also stated that despite efforts in technology promotion and increased funding, research shows that desertification and land degradation are still progressing in some areas; during recent years, the phenomenon has been further aggravated by recurrent drought conditions.

62. The synergies between the various conventions were considered to be necessary, and the related difficulties were recognized.

63. Finally, the Northern Mediterranean countries confirm their interest in cooperating with other Mediterranean countries as well as with the European Community.

64. The AHWG reviewed four national reports from affected countries from Central and Eastern Europe. These presentations have demonstrated the progress made in this region, as well as difficulties encountered in implementing the Convention. The four countries are at the initial stage of implementing the Convention. This is partly due to some serious difficulties which these countries have been facing since the beginning of radical socio-economic transformation and, in particular, to the lack of financial resources. One country has completed preparation of its NAP. Others are at the final stage of preparation. The need for partnership agreements was underlined. Progress was achieved on institutional and legislative measures. Democratization, decentralization and privatization contribute to the participatory process, which could be further improved by increasing the raising of awareness.

65. In countries of Central and Eastern Europe, problems of deforestation, soil and water erosion, degradation of pasture land and salinization are compounded by chemical pollution of soils due to the high use of fertilizers and industrial wastes. Party members of the new Implementation Annex for Central and Eastern Europe look forward to developing a framework for regional cooperation. The transition from centralized planning to market economy in the countries of the former Soviet Union represent both a challenge and an opportunity to improve the management of natural resources in a difficult context. These countries, if given the means to do so, can provide useful assistance in scientific and technical matters, notably to central Asian countries.

D. Presentations of developed country Parties

66. The developed country Parties emphasized the links of UNCCD with such areas of concern as poverty reduction, landscape conservation, ecological sustainability and productivity enhancement. They endorse in this context a holistic approach. They spelled out their efforts in supporting the implementation process and made proposals for further improvements. Developed country Parties presented their respective policy objectives for development cooperation, their thematic areas of support, and the geographical coverage of their intervention, and estimated corresponding financial investments as they spelled out some of their ongoing activities. Parties expressed their willingness to promote effective partnership with all stakeholders and to share knowledge and technical expertise. There was general acknowledgment that further awareness raising, particularly in the field, was needed and they committed themselves to further improving the information exchange.

67. Most developed country Parties identified poverty reduction as the key target for international development. They encouraged developing country Parties to consider how the Convention´s significant potential to combat poverty could be more clearly emphasized; for example poverty reduction strategy processes could be reviewed on an annual basis to allow integration of NAP-related concerns. Donors also emphasized the need to ensure a broader harmonization of desertification into the development frameworks of the recipient countries, particularly the National Sustainable Development Frameworks (NSDFs). The synergy between Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MEA) and UNCCD was also identified as an important strategy.

68. National focal points have an important role to play in terms of harmonization, mainstreaming and synergy, essential in raising the profile of the Convention. Some donors made reference to the availability of financial resources, the representative of the United Kingdom, in particular, indicating that it would consider proactively supporting an increase of financial resources in the forthcoming replenishment of the GEF.

E. Presentations of international organizations

69. International organizations have likewise highlighted their areas of focus in support of the implementation of the Convention. They reflected on the constraints in programme delivery due to resources being more limited now than was foreseen at the time of the adoption of the Convention. Some organizations offered their assessment of the progress of implementation in concerned countries, and shared views of the role they might play in the forthcoming phases of that process.

70. The co-Chairmen noted that only a few intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) presented their reports to the AHWG. While appreciation was expressed to those who did, this fact illustrates the need for mainstreaming the Convention more decisively in the programmes of many international agencies.

F. Contributions from the Committee on Science and Technology

71. The representatives of the CST noted that scarce information relating to scientific or technological activities is contained in the reports. The reports mention *inter alia* a lack of common standards, a lack of access to relevant databases, and the need for field surveys and capacity-building measures to process and analyse information obtained through Geographical Information Systems (GIS) and Environmental Information Systems (EIS). Environment management initiatives must be reinforced through added capacity-building measures, notably at the community level. There is a need to establish concrete stage objectives, time-frames and indicators to measure the positive impact of the efforts to combat desertification on local people's livelihood and economic situation.

72. Few of the reports provide details on how Parties are using either implementation or impact indicators, or whether these indicators are being tested in the field, as requested by various decisions of the COP. No reason has been given as to why the frameworks developed by the CST have not been more widely adopted. Many indicators are being developed as part of other environmental initiatives, such as the National Environmental Action Plan, the State of Environment Report, and National Conservation Strategies. However, most countries intend to develop benchmarks and indicators as a part of the NAP process in order to facilitate a more systematic approach to policy making.

73. Many countries noted the inadequacy of GIS and/or EIS available to desertification focal points. Those countries with operational early-warning systems indicate that these are mostly related to food security, and are not specific enough with respect to desertification. A lack of coordination between national institutions, as well as a lack of information resulting from projects funded by international organizations, is hampering the successful monitoring of progress in the combat against desertification. These factors are also affecting appropriate policy development. Hence, it is difficult for focal points to comply with the standards set out in the Help Guide for drawing up a national report.

74. It was also noted that some reports highlight the need for capacity training and field surveys, so as to establish pilot sites to complement information and data on desertification generated by advanced technology, such as remote sensing and GIS/EIS.

75. Many of the national reports submitted by affected developed country Parties refer to technical assistance provided with regard to global environmental issues, rather than directly addressing the issue of desertification. Representatives from the CST recommend that in the future their reports better describe specific technical and scientific activities undertaken to combat desertification and explicitly mention methodologies used for collecting information on the indigenous knowledge and other technical aspects related to the CST.

G. Contributions from the Global Mechanism

76. The representatives of the Global Mechanism (GM) presented its activities. The interventions made by the GM underlined that the Convention's coverage is broad enough to encompass direct and indirect incentives for sustainable management of natural resources in affected areas, including production and conservation activities, and socio-economic infrastructure and services, as well as support for alternative livelihoods. Hence the need is recognized for the UNCCD National Coordinating Bodies to work with relevant technical departments, in order to encourage mobilization and channelling of the above-mentioned support to affected areas. As part of the matchmaking process, the GM encourages comparative review at field level, systematic analysis of available financing instruments and the identification of the most appropriate consultative framework for partnership to promote UNCCD objectives. Special reference was also made by the GM to the need for collaboration with regional

organizations as a forum for dialogue, and for an instrument for coordination of transboundary intervention and policy harmonization, as well as for a prospectively more cost-effective relay for providing support to countries in the NAP process. The importance of South-South cooperation was also mentioned.

IV. HIGHLIGHTS OF KEY THEMATIC TOPICS

77. On the whole, the presentations and discussions confirmed and expanded on the highlights of the exchanges that took place during the first segment of the AHWG as annexed to decision 2/COP.4.

A. Identification of best practices and successes

78. Some countries are currently drawing up their Poverty Reduction Strategy Process (PRSP) document and/or have started to integrate measures to combat desertification into the framework eligible for a debt swap. It was seen by the participants that this could be a very useful tool for successfully streamlining NAP or UNCCD-related activities into the overall national development strategies, and thereby attracting funding for desertification projects. However, it was also noted that not all affected developing countries are required or wish to draw up a PRSP. Therefore, a need for harmonization of existing assistance frameworks is acknowledged.

79. National Information Systems on desertification existing in some countries have helped a great deal to enhance the information flow, not only between governmental agencies or scientific research institutions, but also with civil society and the NGO community.

80. At the institutional level, efforts were made to adjust the regulatory and normative framework to the requirements of the Convention, notably to encourage a more rational use of natural resources under UNCCD, improve land tenure regimes, introduce Environment Impact Assessment or stimulate the initiatives of private investors.

81. In larger countries, the relationship between the federal government, the state/territory governments, the local governments and the communities was strengthened through the UNCCD process and generated various coordinating bodies, intermediate (watershed) authorities and self-help groups.

82. Progress was also achieved in triggering a broad dialogue in the NAP preparation context and ensuring widespread dissemination and ownership of the NAP. The support of the resident coordinators of the United Nations system was found to be effective, whenever resources were made available to the UNDP field offices to support the NAP process. At times, it was found possible to improve the conditions for partnership, through the identification and coordination of complementary initiatives by means of sectoral or thematic planning instruments.

83. Participatory bottom-up approaches at local level were often supported by consultative mechanisms at regional and local levels that can serve the decentralized involvement of stakeholders and natural resources end users in the development process for a variety of programmes beyond the Convention. The promotion of women's role in rural development is facilitated by this instrument. Communication strategies to this effect integrated traditional and recent technologies in support of participatory development.

84. Countries and NGOs reported positive results in the strengthening of capacities for key actors within civil society to identify and address challenges linked to sustainable development. In this respect, measures in support of participatory development could be better reflected in the forthcoming revision of the Help Guide.

85. Some affected developed country Parties reported success in their awareness-raising efforts and were impressed by a strong response from their populations, municipalities and academic institutions who demonstrated a growing interest in UNCCD-related issues.

86. Many successful experiences were registered through a combination of private entrepreneurship, social mobilization and the application of appropriate technologies. Drip irrigation, soil conditioning and hydroponic crop production have proved economically viable in arid conditions. Ecotourism projects contribute to the protection of natural reserves. Progress was made at micro-level in relevant areas, such as the efficient use of scarce water, land reclamation, range management or protection of the vegetal cover. Programme development within the UNCCD framework is expected to multiply and replicate these successful experiences at field level.

87. With regard to scientific cooperation, it was noted that the research centres of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) conduct important work for the drylands in the areas of soil fertility, stress tolerant plants and germoplasm. A combination of traditional methods with modern technologies was shown to be successful in many cases.

88. In summary, Parties agree on the need to identify, describe and quantify successful interventions in order to attract investments and increase the effectiveness and efficiency of programmes across a broad range of fields, from policy to partnerships, from local participatory practices to specific biophysical techniques.

B. Identification of main difficulties, obstacles and challenges

89. Many of the presentations detailed the constraints yet to be overcome for the implementation process fully to unfold.

a) Ongoing threat to the drylands ecosystems

90. Since the first session of the AHWG, it has been confirmed by the international scientific community that accelerated trends in climate change, with a context of worsening drought, unreliable rainfall patterns and confirmed water scarcity, are perceived as a growing threat for the affected Parties of this Convention. Consequences of further degradation are likely to spread far beyond the confines of the drylands. Precise assessment of the threat at country level is made difficult because of the lack of exact data on land degradation and inadequate climatological and hydrological capabilities.

b) Macro policy and legislative frameworks

91. It was observed that the UNCCD NAPs cut across a number of critical areas highlighted in development strategies, such as agriculture, forestry or water management. The Convention corresponds to many advocated policies such as a more decentralized and democratic governance of national resources, the improvement of the socio-economic conditions of lower income groups or the conservation of a common good which is the fertile topsoil that sustains agricultural productivity.

92. Parties need to ensure a consistent treatment of policy issues across various sectoral ministries and negotiation forums. Inappropriate policies at the macro-level in areas such as trade practices or agricultural subsidies can have a significant influence on land-use patterns. There is a need to pursue a better integration of environmental and economic policies and, in cases where appropriate legislative frameworks are in place, to ensure an enhanced compliance. Land tenure systems can hamper progress in the fight against desertification.

c) Coordination at country level

93. The multi-sectoral nature of combating desertification implies many complexities in fostering inter-ministerial cooperation. Moreover, the growing multiplication of programmes, funds and institutions could be creating obstacles to a cost-effective implementation of sustainable development policies. Parties express the hope that the Convention-related programme instruments should receive due attention as they express commitments under an international legally binding instrument. In this context, the suggested process of incorporating the NAPs into broader strategic frameworks that may follow their own conditionality should respect the integrity of the NAP process.

94. In ecosystems characterized by desertification, the NAP is not sufficiently recognized as a useful basis for integrating synergistic measures, for instance with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). The NAP can also more decisively highlight the critical environmental aspects within the existing focus on poverty alleviation strategies. Integrated programming and mainstreaming, however, while maintaining a participatory approach, is an exercise that itself calls for enabling support.

95. In this context the developed country Parties once more highlighted the need for affected developing country Parties to insert the Convention-related measures into the multilateral negotiations with the World Bank, the United Nations and the European Community system as well as during bilateral negotiations with developed country Parties. In each case, the ministry of finance, the planning commission, the prime minister's office or any department involved in relationships with donors must be included in this dialogue. However, the focal points of affected developing countries face, on the one hand, multilateral institutions with diminished resources; on the other hand they do not always find that the bilateral partners are sufficiently aware of the Convention. Nor are developed country Parties bilaterally present in all the concerned affected country Parties.

96. It was recognized that developed country Parties, as cooperating partners, were taking steps to internalize the Convention in their own aid delivery process, and they were invited to adjust their own procedures for the delivery of programme resources in a manner deemed adequate to fulfil their commitment as Parties to this instrument. In this respect an enhanced understanding on the part of their embassies and the field representatives of their aid agencies concerning the steps which need to be taken at this stage of the Convention process would be most helpful.

d) Financing of the Convention and transfer of technology

97. Availability of finance has been identified by some as the structural flaw of the Convention. The mobilization of financial resources from member countries and international partners emerges again as a key challenge, notably as the process moves from the phase of NAP preparation to the phase of NAP implementation. As an illustration of this point, Mali, which had completed its round table process, reported having received support for 30% of the identified needs. The gap between needs and financial aid must be bridged through the establishment of country-based mechanisms for partnership arrangements.

98. The identification of various forms of assistance on a concrete territorial basis at the local level would facilitate sectoral convergences and a better articulation of external assistance. Such an approach would also support in affected countries an effective field level coordination between the three Rio conventions.

99. It was noted that financial support is also acutely needed at the subregional and regional level. While Parties agree on the logic of tackling some important ecosystem challenges at the regional level, subregional and regional bodies need strengthening in order to participate fully in the UNCCD implementation. Initiatives need to focus on success stories already available. Replication of best practices could serve as a useful tool for passing on existing knowledge and methods.

100. Alternative ways of combating desertification should be sought, such as creating market opportunities for the private sector, and particularly the tourism sector, in order to attract funding for combating desertification. Synergism with CBD could enhance the prospect of creating ecotourist resorts that maintain and conserve fragile ecosystems such as dry areas.

101. It was observed that the Global Mechanism could head a review of the sources of funding for the Convention, including alternative sources of funding such as private foundations, private sector development funds and so on. The Global Mechanism is also expected to raise resources for the transfer of technology. It was made explicit that the matchmaking and partnership-building role of the Global Mechanism can only be effective with the active participation of development partners through their financial assistance and technical cooperation frameworks.

C. Level of participation of all actors, including the financial and technical support from developed countries

102. Presentations express various levels of political will through the governmental decision-making and the budget allocation processes, although in many countries more progress is still required in this respect. Heads of state have participated in national tree-planting campaigns and the cabinets of prime ministers have at times been involved in coordination activities. Many national plans now include combating desertification.

a) Participatory development process involving civil society, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community-based organizations (CBOs)

103. Participation of non-governmental organizations and civil society entities is essential in the elaboration and implementation of UNCCD. Most of the presentations of national reports have specifically mentioned the participation of NGOs/CBOs and women's organizations in consultations regarding the development of anti-drought and anti-desertification plans.

104. However, still more needs to be done in order to bring people's organizations into the mainstream policy and decision-making process. Many states lack a strong civil society presence, and thus are prone to failure of the UNCCD implementation plans. It is the responsibility of the focal point institutions of UNCCD (with backing from the secretariat of the Convention, the Global Mechanism and interested institutions) to advocate strongly the inclusion of non-governmental sector representatives into decision-making consultation. National focal points (NFPs) should develop a facilitating legal environment, within the NAP framework, in their respective countries, so that the civil society elements can not only provide their valuable input, but also mobilize populations affected by desertification for the successful implementation of projects.

105. In this respect the NGOs also drew the AHWG's attention to the problem of including the representatives of NGOs, CBOs and women's organizations in the regional and/or subregional initiatives related to UNCCD. It is important to encourage not only regional and subregional intergovernmental meetings, but meetings of NGOs. This would enable them to share their experiences (for example of awareness-raising campaigns, mobilization of civil society actors, cooperation with other stakeholders, meeting socio-economic needs, best practices and so on). Exchanges might be particularly helpful for those countries where NGOs and CBOs are not yet developed.

106. Some of the delegates observed shortcomings in the involvement of civil society, NGOs and women in the NAP processes, as reflected in some country Parties' reports. There is a need to improve the Help Guide in terms of the inclusion of a certain number of indicators on civil society involvement into the process of elaboration and implementation of the NAPs, SRAPs and RAPs. It is, of course, crucial to have NGOs involved in the elaboration of these criteria.

107. The link between decentralization, local control and access to natural resources and desertification was mentioned several times from the point of view of community-based resources and land tenure issues. Links between tenure regimes and environmental degradation need to be explored further and to include a discussion of incentive systems, right of use and land ownership.

b) Establishment of consultative mechanisms for the conclusion of partnership agreements

108. Developed country Parties' support for UNCCD implementation must be channelled through a clearly identified mechanism. Many NAPs, SRAPs and RAPs have completed the design phase and the consultative phase leading to the stakeholders' consensus on the objective activities and expected results of these programmes. However, the operational phase cannot materialize without resources. The question was raised as to at what point in this process Parties can consider that the UNCCD instruments have really entered into force.

109. Perhaps the key priority measure identified as moving the UNCCD process forward at national level consists in setting up and building upon a country-driven consultative process to bring about partnership arrangements as an indispensable condition for making the Convention operational. This measure responds to the analysis of constraints spelled out in the above paragraphs. In this context the respective contribution of multilateral and bilateral partners must be more clearly defined. The comparative advantage of the UNDP field offices in concretely backing the process, whenever resources were available, was demonstrated in many countries.

110. The role of *chef de file* to catalyse bilateral interest, coordination and support must be reviewed. Indeed the coordination of external financial flows was also perceived as a difficult challenge. The usefulness of the role of the *chef de file* could be further assessed to facilitate an ongoing stream of information and to strengthen the welcome level of working relationships and contacts.

D. Linkages and synergies with other conventions on the environment and development

111. Many affected country Parties noted that their territories still offer a considerable wealth of species and that biodiversity protection cannot be secured without measures to combat land degradation and desertification. In this sense the Convention offers a range of instruments well suited for nature conservation, and its potential must be more clearly actualized.

112. Linkages and synergies with other multilateral environment agreements and/or strategic frameworks on environment and development must be further encouraged through concrete initiatives. Synergistic programmes with a territorial basis in the drylands can be promoted through capacity building initiatives and can provide a more sustainable support for biodiversity protection, carbon sequestration, wetlands protection and other topics of interest for sustainable development.

113. Some efforts are under way to foster integrating the approaches of UNCCD, UNFCCC and CBD. It was observed that the forthcoming initiatives under the International Forest Forum should also be integrated. Support through the joint work programme of CBD and UNCCD could assist affected countries in their assessment efforts. It was suggested that national workshops involving focal

points of the relevant environmental conventions could further facilitate the implementation of joint work programmes.

E. Strategies established within the framework of sustainable development plans and/or policies

114. Parties agreed that the request for integration with other instruments such as the PRSP might be called for, as appropriate, but should not be tantamount to imposing new conditionality on the implementation of an international treaty. Frameworks such as the National Strategies for Sustainable Development, the PRSPs, the National Development Plans, other Rio conventions, the Tropical Forestry Action Plan, the National Conservation Strategy, the United Nations Development Assistance Framework, the National Environment Action Programme, or other bilaterally oriented frameworks, are very relevant for UNCCD but they pursue their own objectives.

115. For UNCCD issues to be fully represented in the process of the coordination of policies and strategic frameworks for sustainable development, it is necessary that the influential aid agencies and organizations represented at country level facilitate the task of the NFP in liaising with him/her and in improving the coordination between their own planning instruments.

116. The establishment of an integrated land use and natural resources management policy for drylands would facilitate coherent planning and the incorporation of social and economic development as one of the instruments for combating desertification.

117. The NFP may benefit from the development of general guidelines on the harmonization of strategic frameworks within the context of UNCCD, notably with respect to the desired synergy among the Rio conventions.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND CONCRETE RECOMMENDATIONS ON FURTHER STEPS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION

A. Strategies and policy frameworks

118. Parties welcomed the holding of the forthcoming World Summit on Sustainable Development (Rio+10) and considered it an excellent opportunity to mobilize more political will and financial resources to promote UNCCD.

119. Parties recognize that the challenge of mainstreaming or integrating the NAP into broader strategic frameworks or consultative processes for sustainable development is a complex matter that should be dealt with through an appropriate consultation mechanism at country level.

120. Country Parties, sitting as members of the governing boards of multilateral organizations, technical agencies and development banks, should facilitate the coherence of these respective policy and strategy frameworks with the discharging of their obligations under UNCCD. The forthcoming COP may wish to invite such Parties to encourage a more direct response on the part of these organizations to the needs of the people in the drylands through the UNCCD implementation process. In this respect the emerging cooperation between the European Community and the affected Asian, Caribbean and Pacific countries is encouraged.

121. A global assessment and regular update of the status of desertification worldwide remains a necessity. Recent relevant multilateral initiatives must be more closely related to UNCCD. For instance, managers of the MEA, the Dry Lands Degradation Assessment (LADA) and of the Integrated Land and Water Management Initiative for Africa should more actively seek cooperation with and involvement of the UNCCD national focal points in relevant countries. Likewise, managers of the Capacity Development Initiative should be invited to consider including support to the UNCCD regional thematic networks in their programme.

122. Ongoing economic policy debates in multilateral forums such as the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) must better take into account the implications of trade, pricing and subsidies for the sustainable use of natural resources in the drylands. The COP may wish to invite the Committee on Trade and Environment of the WTO to include UNCCD-related matters in its deliberations from the point of view of a more open access of drylands products to international markets.

123. The potential for private sector investment in the drylands is recognized in such sectors as the mining and extraction industry, ecotourism and the production of medicinal plants and genetic material for the pharmaceutical industry or hydroponic agricultural production. Nevertheless incentives must be provided to encourage a sustainable use of land resources by corporate interests. The promulgation of environment-friendly guidelines for the relevant sectors of the economy in the drylands should be encouraged so as to ensure benefits at the local level. In this respect, the UNCCD secretariat is invited to pursue its cooperation with the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN).

124. To promote the policy coherence needed within the United Nations system, the COP should invite the Secretary-General to recommend to the heads of the relevant agencies a decisive effort, so as better to orient the interventions of their respective organizations towards support of the Convention for the ultimate benefit of lower-income groups in the drylands.

B. Institutional aspects including the implementation review process

125. Coordination at country level is seen as of utmost priority. Affected country Parties are urged to facilitate a closer coordination between the UNCCD NFPs and relevant government bodies involved in the allocation of development aid, such as ministries of finance, planning commissions or departments of foreign affairs in charge of the coordination of aid. NFPs are invited to raise the priority of combating desertification in multilateral and bilateral negotiations.

126. Developed country Parties and the European Community are expected more explicitly to mobilize the local representatives of their aid agency or embassy to liaise more directly with the NFP in order to support the NAP formulation, to mainstream the environmental dimension of UNCCD in their development programmes and to incorporate drylands environmental and social cost analysis in the identification and planning of their projects.

127. Developed country Parties are invited to use the review process to strengthen further the coherence of their ongoing bilateral and multilateral aid efforts with those of the developing country Parties implementing the Convention. Developed country Parties are encouraged actively to incorporate the findings of the process into their programming of future assistance measures.

128. Relevant international organizations are requested to contribute more actively to the forthcoming review process through a presentation of measures they are taking in support of the launching of the operational phase of the implementation process.

129. Parties recognize the need to adjust their national reporting to the evolving needs of the implementation process, notably with respect to the activities related to the CST and the involvement of civil society, and therefore request the secretariat to modify the Help Guide accordingly in order to assist in the preparation of the second generation of national reports.

130. All Parties agree on the necessity for a continued exchange of information and for an analytical assessment in order to monitor the implementation of the Convention and to enable the COP to take appropriate measures in the evolving context of its constraints and progress. Affected developing countries call for

the establishment of a standing subsidiary body of the COP to review implementation as a decisive step towards adequately discharging this critical task.

C. Participatory process and outreach at the local level

131. The Convention was found to be largely successful in raising awareness of the need for sustainable management of natural resources at grassroots level, but the interest raised must be sustained by appropriate action. Provisions for support must be earmarked within the UNCCD NAP for further awareness-raising activities and to sustain the participatory implementation of the Convention. More specifically, it is recommended that local area programmes be developed, identifying opportunities for synergistic initiatives to be taken on a territorial basis, at the grassroots level.

132. It was also deemed necessary to inform public opinion in developed country Parties on the relevance of the Convention, notably in the context of broad concerns such as reducing rural poverty or forced emigration from the drylands.

133. Added resources deriving from climate adaptation funding sources should thus permit such programmes under the UNCCD NAPs by initiating capacity-building measures, in order to equip local communities to deliver obligations under UNCCD, CBD and UNFCCC. Such training would include guidelines on planning an integrated set of measures that restore degraded environments, protect the biodiversity and maintain carbon sinks while responding to the socio-economic needs of the local population. Lessons learned during the UNCCD process must be made available at local level.

D. Consultative mechanism for partnership arrangements

134. Parties that have completed their NAPs now face the immediate need to establish a predictable consultative mechanism for the conclusion of partnership arrangements. The COP may consider how the respective NFPs can receive the earliest support in this respect.

135. The positive role of the resident coordinators of the United Nations system in support of the NAP process was commended, and the field offices of UNDP should facilitate more systematically the convening of UNCCD-related consultative meetings.

136. Similarly, the NFP in all regions and bilateral donors might wish to identify bilateral *chefs de file* in their respective countries to join in the common launching of this necessary consultative process. Developed country Parties are invited to consult among themselves under an appropriate Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) framework in order to agree on a common policy with respect to country-driven consultative mechanisms for partnership arrangements under UNCCD and to report to the forthcoming COP on progress made on this matter.

137. It is recommended that COP 5 agree on a proposal for a schedule of consultative meetings for countries that have adopted their NAPs, in conformity with the pertinent provisions of the regional implementation annexes of the Convention.

E. Measures taken within the NAP framework

138. Lack of funding was quoted as the most common reason given for delays in preparing the NAPs to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought. The co-Chairmen can only reiterate in this respect the appeal they made in their interim report on the first session of the AHWG. In the context of the Declaration on Commitment adopted at COP 4 it is indeed appropriate for bilateral and multilateral donors to provide catalytic funds to enable the completion of the NAPs. They are invited to review ways and means of doing so before COP 5.

139. Improved national coordination requires, to start with, enhancing the information exchange between ministries and relevant organizations and/or agencies. The scientific and research communities must also be included. It is important further to improve information exchange at the national level, particularly taking into consideration the fact that bilateral assistance negotiators should be associated at an early stage with the NAP process, as well as ministries of planning and finance. A greater coherence of information flows at national level will enhance the likelihood of receiving financial assistance for desertification projects. Various sources of assistance, including private sector funding, should be sought to equip NFPs and key stakeholders with the appropriate information technology.

140. Centralizing the NAP with a multitude of other instruments addressing problems associated with desertification and drought is a considerable challenge that the NFP must confront with adequate support from multilateral and bilateral partners in terms of coordination, exchange of timely information and, as appropriate, technical assistance. To ensure effective monitoring of UNCCD, links with relevant instruments must be created while preserving the integrity of the NAP formulation and adoption process.

F. Subregional and regional cooperation

141. The problems created by human factors and the interactions between ecosystems often call for common solutions in countries sharing the same ecosystems. It also calls for the effective communication and exploitation of best practices and of lessons learned, particularly with respect to GIS systems, meteorology or knowledge-based agro-ecology. In this respect the role of subregional and regional organizations was commended, and the call for strengthening their capacities to back up NAP development in member countries was reiterated.

142. Regional thematic networks need to be further strengthened. They play a cost-effective role in support of CST-driven initiatives such as those on benchmarks and indicators, the promotion and protection of traditional knowledge and building on best practices. Initiatives need to focus on success stories already available. Replication of best practices could serve as a useful tool for passing on existing knowledge.

143. In the light of the above, the need for partnership agreements at subregional and regional level was emphasized by many Parties, notably in the light of the fact that specialized subregional and regional institutions are in a position to bring a welcome substantive contribution to the review of the implementation process.

144. It is recommended that further exchanges of information, advisory services and experience between the regional implementation annexes of the Convention be promoted, making full use of existing subregional and regional institutions for South-South cooperation.

G. Financing of the Convention

145. The Parties agreed that the allocation of provisions to agriculture, rural development and/or the combat against desertification within the national budget of an affected country Party is an important indication of the political will of that country to discharge its obligations under UNCCD. Consistent with the Declaration on the Commitments to Enhance the Implementation of the Convention adopted at COP 4, they reiterated the necessity for provision of substantial financial assistance to developing countries.

146. The Parties expressed appreciation for the efforts of the Global Mechanism in discharging its mandate and the positive role it plays in further mobilizing donors. Nevertheless, the Parties acknowledged that, five years after the entry into force of the Convention, the Convention could not avail itself of a predictable mechanism for financing, in a timely and adequate manner, the

Convention's enabling activities such as the preparation of national reports or the preparation and adoption of programming instruments at national, subregional or regional levels, let alone finance for operational activities under the NAPs.

147. In this context, on the supply side of the provision of required finance, a significant number of Parties recommend the Council of the GEF to include, during the forthcoming replenishment exercise, a financing window for combating desertification to access GEF resources in order to secure and facilitate the Convention's implementation including enabling activities.

148. In the meantime, on the demand side of the provision of required finance, the UNDP field offices in affected countries should be provided with the necessary additional resources to facilitate, together with a bilateral *chef de file*, the convening of the consultative meetings to bring about the partnership arrangements necessary to finance the proposed operations under the NAPs, in cooperation with the Global Mechanism and the secretariat.

149. The Global Mechanism, in cooperation with the members of its Facilitation Committee, should target an early matching of demand and supply through the facilitation of funding for the NAP's operations, and should be entrusted with monitoring the follow-up activities of this consultative process in order to facilitate the timely disbursement of pledged assistance. Its role should also be strengthened in support of the subregional and regional action programmes.

H. Issues related to the Committee on Science and Technology, including benchmarks and indicators

150. Environment management initiatives must be reinforced through added capacity-building measures, notably at the local level. More specifically, capacity training for focal points is needed for a systematic training in the development and application of indicators related to desertification, as well as in the use of GIS and EIS.

151. Information and awareness raising should also reach the academic and scientific community, and should cover, as part of a national monitoring system specific to desertification, those issues related to the development and application of benchmarks and indicators, so that representatives from the National Coordinating Body (NCB) can start utilizing and testing the implementation indicators elaborated by the CST with the necessary institutional backing of the scientific communities in their own countries. Impact indicators have not yet been agreed upon by the CST.

152. Financial assistance is needed so as to ensure that pilot activity areas can be established in which to test the indicators as part of a monitoring and assessment process, in accordance with CST recommendations.

153. Financial assistance is also required for conducting national inventories of traditional knowledge and practices used to combat desertification. The UNCCD regional thematic networks represent a decentralized capacity for expanding the coverage of these activities and should be enabled to do so.

154. Finally it was recommended that in reviewing the Help Guide for the preparation of NAPs as stipulated in decision 10/COP.4, the secretariat should reflect the needs of affected developed country Parties. The secretariat should also include the following guidelines that reflect the concerns, activities and recommendations of the CST, and which should be used, as appropriate, by Parties:

- the development and utilization of benchmarks and indicators that go beyond the physical and biological indicators so as to touch on institutional, including legislative as well as socio-economic, issues such as qualitative and quantitative evaluation of civil society participation;

- the utilization of, or need for, early warning systems tools for the management of drought;

- the presentation of key ongoing and/or planned activities, projects and programmes that either tackle the root causes or correct the visible effects of desertification in order to draw lessons learned and share scientific and technical approaches utilized;

- the illustration of South-South and North-South collaborative efforts that highlight the benefits of the exchange and transfer of information, technologies and technical know-how;

- the presentation of strategies and approaches used to collect, share and communicate information for the purposes of advocacy and sensitization, as well as the utilization and improvement of traditional knowledge for combating desertification;

- the presentation of ongoing and/or planned synergistic or collaborative approaches and activities with other MEAs, particularly the CBD and the UNFCCC.

VI. CONCLUSION OF THE SESSION

A. Adoption of the report of the Ad Hoc Working Group to the fifth session of the Conference of the Parties

155. At the 29th meeting of the resumed session, the AHWG adopted its comprehensive draft report as contained in ICCD/COP(4)/AHWG/L.2/Rev.1. The UNCCD secretariat was requested to release the final report, including the relevant organizational matters as appropriate, and to include it among the official documents to be transmitted to the Conference of the Parties at its fifth session for consideration.

B. Closure of the session

156. Statements made at the closing ceremony are summarized in annex IV.

Annex I

SUMMARIES OF OPENING AND GENERAL STATEMENTS

In his opening address to the AHWG, the Executive Secretary of UNCCD, Mr. Hama Arba Diallo, recalled the task of the meeting which was to highlight difficulties in implementing UNCCD and to recommend concrete measures for policy makers. Reviewing the results achieved, he said that the most important action remains the incorporation of long-term strategies combating desertification into national policies. Mr. Diallo pointed up the issue of resources mobilization and requested the building up of a true partnership in favour of affected country Parties.

The co-Chairman of the AHWG, in an introductory statement, outlined the procedural guidelines of the meeting, dedicated to the in-depth review and analysis of reports by adopting thematic approaches without neglecting other issues. He proposed a schedule in regional segments and indicated the way in which work would be conducted.

The representative of Sweden, on behalf of the European Union and its member countries, expressed the wish to raise the levels of participation of all actors and to improve linkages and synergies with other conventions. He also welcomed the participation of international organizations, governmental and non-governmental organizations and civil society in helping to tackle land degradation and drought. He listed some relevant and pragmatic sequences for practical implementation of national action programmes.

As far as the elaboration of reports is concerned, the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, underlined in his statement the difficulties related to institutional frameworks and a lack of predictable financial resources. Laying stress on the principle of equal treatment of the three Rio conventions, he expressed an urgent need to ensure that predictable and adequate resources are available.

Annex II

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE CO-CHAIRMEN ON THE BASIS OF THE FIRST SESSION OF THE AD HOC WORKING GROUP

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE RESUMED SESSION OF THE AD HOC WORKING GROUP

(a) Affected country Parties presenting their reports during the inter-session of the AHWG are invited to take fully into account the procedures to review reports submitted at the third and fourth sessions of the COP contained in decision 1/COP.4, notably its operative paragraph 2. In the light of the important number of reports to be submitted during the resumed session of the AHWG, the affected country Parties are, to the extent possible, invited to make use of multimedia equipment.

(b) Developed country Parties participating in the review of these reports are invited to provide specific feedback on the conclusions they reach and the steps they intend to take in the light of the submission of reports from affected country Parties.

(c) As demonstrated at the COP 4 session of the AHWG, developed country Parties should continue to use the learning opportunity offered by the review process to further educate their ongoing bilateral and multilateral aid efforts to assist developing country Parties. Developed country Parties are encouraged to actively incorporate their response to the reports into their consideration of future assistance measures.

(d) Relevant international organizations are requested to contribute more actively to the review process through a presentation of measures they are taking in response to the issues and concerns expressed in the national reports.

(e) Presentations and exchanges during the resumed session should facilitate forward-looking conclusions on the substance of the matters under review and the next steps to be taken in order to foster the implementation process.

(f) If time permits, presentations from countries of a given region could be concluded by an informal wrap up of main lessons learnt and priority themes to be addressed. There would thus be opportunities for such exchanges for each of the regional implementation annexes.

(g) Likewise it is suggested to accommodate, to the extent possible, a review of the reports of developed country Parties and relevant international organizations.

(h) With regard to the national action programme (NAP) preparation process, the co-Chairmen would also like to launch an appeal to the countries in position to do so, to complete and adopt their NAP instruments so as to be in a position to report on new developments at the inter-session of the AHWG. They also invite partner countries and international organizations to provide early support to these efforts.

(i) The resumed session should take place at a location that facilitates maximum participation.

Annex III

DOCUMENTS BEFORE THE AD HOC WORKING GROUP AT ITS INTER-SESSIONAL MEETING

Document symbol	Title or description
ICCD/COP(3)/5	Review of the implementation of the Convention, including support to regional action programmes
ICCD/COP(3)/5/Add.1	Reports by developed country Parties on measures taken to assist affected African country Parties in the preparation and implementation of action programmes
ICCD/COP(3)/5/Add.2	Reports on implementation of the Convention by affected African country Parties
ICCD/COP(3)/5/Add.3	Information provided by United Nations organizations, and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations on their support to the preparation and implementation of action programmes in Africa
ICCD/COP(3)/5/Add.5	Progress made in the formulation and implementation of subregional and regional action programmes in Africa
ICCD/COP(4)/3	Implementation of the Convention - Review of the report of the secretariat on progress made by affected country Parties in the implementation of the Convention
ICCD/COP(4)/3/Add.1	Implementation of the Convention - Reports on implementation of affected country Parties of regions other than Africa, including on the participatory process and on experience gained and results achieved in the preparation and implementation of national action programmes - Review of the report on progress made in the formulation and implementation of subregional and regional action programmes in regions other than Africa (Asia)
ICCD/COP(4)/3/Add.2	Implementation of the Convention - Reports on implementation of affected country Parties of regions other than Africa, including on the participatory process and on experience gained and results achieved in the preparation and implementation of national action programmes - Review of the report on progress made in the formulation and implementation of subregional and regional action programmes in regions other than Africa (Latin America and the Caribbean)

Document symbol	Title or description
ICCD/COP(4)/3/Add.3	Implementation of the Convention - Reports on implementation of affected country Parties of regions other than Africa, including on the participatory process and on experience gained and results achieved in the preparation and implementation of national action programmes - Review of the report on progress made in the formulation and implementation of subregional and regional action programmes in regions other than Africa (Northern Mediterranean and other affected country Parties)
ICCD/COP(4)/3/Add.4	Implementation of the Convention - Reports by developed country Parties on measures taken to assist in the preparation and implementation of action programmes, including information on financial resources they have provided, or are providing, under the Convention
ICCD/COP(4)/3/Add.5	Implementation of the Convention - Review of information provided by organs, funds and programmes of the United Nations system, as well as other intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, on their activities in support of the preparation and implementation of action programmes under the Convention - Review of available information regarding the financing of the implementation of the Convention by multilateral agencies and institutions, including information on the activities of the Global Environment Facility concerning desertification that relate to its four focal areas, as specified in article 20, paragraph 2(b) of the Convention
ICCD/COP(4)/9	Accreditation of intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, admission of observers
ICCD/COP(4)/9/Add.1	Accreditation of intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, admission of observers
ICCD/COP(4)/11/Add.1	Report of the Conference of the Parties at the fourth session. Part II: Decisions taken by the Conference
ICCD/COP(4)/AHWG/1	Summaries of national reports from affected African country Parties
ICCD/COP(4)/AHWG/1/Add.1	Summaries of national reports from affected African country Parties
ICCD/COP(4)/AHWG/2	Summaries of national reports from affected Asian country Parties
ICCD/COP(4)/AHWG/2/Add.1	Summaries of national reports from affected Asian country Parties
ICCD/COP(4)/AHWG/2/Add.2	Summaries of national reports from affected Asian country Parties
ICCD/COP(4)/AHWG/2/Add.3	Summaries of national reports from affected Asian country Parties

Document symbol	Title or description
ICCD/COP(4)/AHWG/3	Summaries of national reports from affected Latin American and the Caribbean country Parties
ICCD/COP(4)/AHWG/3/Add.1	Summaries of national reports from affected Latin American and the Caribbean country Parties
ICCD/COP(4)/AHWG/3/Add.2	Summaries of national reports from affected Latin American and the Caribbean country Parties
ICCD/COP(4)/AHWG/4	Summaries of national reports from Northern Mediterranean and other affected country Parties
ICCD/COP(4)/AHWG/4/Add.1	Summaries of national reports from Northern Mediterranean and other affected country Parties
ICCD/COP(4)/AHWG/5	Ad Hoc Working Group - Tentative agenda - Adoption of the agenda and organization of work
ICCD/COP(4)/AHWG/INF.1	Ad Hoc Working Group - Preliminary information for participants
ICCD/COP(4)/INF.2	Status of ratification of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
ICCD/COP(4)/CST/5	Synthesis of scientific and technical information contained in the reports from country Parties, in particular on benchmarks and indicators, for review by the CST

Other documents:

Third session of the Conference of the Parties

ICCD/COP(3)/20	Report of the Conference of the Parties at its third session: Proceedings
ICCD/COP(3)/20/Add.1	Report of the Conference of the Parties at its third session: Action taken

Second session of the Conference of the Parties

ICCD/COP(2)/14	Report of the Conference of the Parties at its second session: Proceedings
ICCD/COP(2)/14/Add.1	Report of the Conference of the Parties at its second session: Action taken

First session of the Conference of the Parties

ICCD/COP(1)/11	Report of the Conference of the Parties at its first session: Proceedings
ICCD/COP(1)/11/Add.1	Report of the Conference of the Parties at its first session: Action taken

Annex IV

SUMMARIES OF STATEMENTS MADE AT THE CLOSING SESSION

Following the adoption of the report by the AHWG, the Executive Secretary of the UNCCD Mr. Hama Arba Diallo, pointed out, in his final statement, how important this inter-sessional meeting has been in the UNCCD process. Underlining the similarity of difficulties encountered by most of the affected country Parties in implementing the Convention, Mr. Diallo recalled that the mobilization of financial and technical resources remains the challenge for the international community. He also noted the need expressed by Parties to integrate their NAPs fully into their national development strategies and to reinforce the synergy between the three Rio conventions while avoiding a top down approach.

The representative of Sweden, on behalf of European Union and its Member countries, took note of the success of the inter-sessional meeting and recognized the capital importance of the in-depth review process undertaken by the AHWG.

Taking into account the difficulties recorded and the solutions advocated during the meeting, the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the final report of the AHWG represented a step towards the effective implementation of the Convention.

Representatives of other affected as well as developed country Parties welcomed the quality of the presentations and the open discussion on national reports, which was held during the three-week session. The review process will help Parties not only in shaping their views on lessons drawn from the implementation of the Convention in different regions, but also in finding ways and means to achieve the long-term goals of the UNCCD.

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